

Pledging the Moon, Bush's Bold And Clear Vision

By Gary Martin, NASA Space Architect, writing in response to the *Minneapolis Star*

The op-ed, "Pledging the Moon, Bush's Bold but Sketchy Vision," unfortunately missed the major point of the President's initiative – it's not about a single destination; it's about our destiny as explorers. Now more than ever, our nation must continue to invest in our future by advancing scientific knowledge and spurring technological advancement. The President's initiative is a forward-looking proposal that will result in tangible benefits for all Americans.

The President's initiative provides a sufficient, yet affordable investment in our nation's space program for a relatively modest cost over the next five years. The annual cost equivalent for the average taxpayer is a family trip to the movies. This is a small price to pay for a focused exploration program that inspires the next generation of scientists and engineers and provides profound insight into some of humanity's most fundamental questions such as: How did we get here? Where are we going? Are we alone?

As to the value of the vision, NASA's plan to carry out the President's initiative will usher in a bold new era in space exploration. Its overarching purpose is not simply to reach other worlds, but to explore them, to make scientific discoveries, to bring those discoveries home – to the benefit of mankind. The strategic stepping-stone approach that NASA will use to build a sustainable infrastructure for human and robotic deep-space exploration is the antithesis of the "planting the flag" approach mentioned in the article.